TL4427

CATHNEWS

NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

5 December 1997

STATEMENT BY CARDINAL HUME
TO MARK THE 22ND ANNIVERSARY OF THE INVASION OF EAST TIMOR

During his visit to London this year Bishop Belo, Apostolic Administrator of Dili, East Timor, and Nobel Laureate, spoke movingly of the plight of his people after twenty-two years of Indonesian rule. His overriding concern was that there can be no solution to the problem of East Timor whilst the people of that country live under conditions of occupation. The sense of threat from the occupying forces needs to be lifted by their "drastic reduction, even complete withdrawal".

He spoke constructively about means of finding the way forward. He stressed the need for respect for the dignity of the human person and of peoples. He underlined the importance of the UN being permitted to play its full and proper role in helping to create a non-threatening environment in which confidence can grow. Above all, he called for dialogue, a willingness on all sides to change, and a spirit of reconciliation. I heartily support Bishop Belo's efforts for peace and justice.

Sadly, I understand that since Bishop Belo's visit here there has not been any discernible improvement. Violence has been used by both sides. I have been informed that only two weeks ago soldiers fired on unarmed students in Dili, severely injuring three. The spirit of reconciliation requires respect for human rights, and an end to violence on all sides, which Bishop Belo and others have recently called for. Arms supplies to Indonesia require particular attention. Bishop Belo said "Restrict still further the conditions under which such trade is permitted."

I welcome recent moves by the British Government to review trade and arms sales policy and hope that internationally this and other measures will be pursued. I welcome efforts to raise Christian awareness in this country and other Western countries of the situation in East Timor, and to promote prayer and support for the Church there. And I welcome efforts to promote human development in East Timor which helps the people to participate in shaping their future.

ENDS

Catholic Media Office
39 Eccleston Square
London SW1V 1BX

Tel: 0171 828 8709 Fax: 0171 931 7678
e-mail: cathmedia@easynet.co.uk
Internet: http://www.tasc.ac.uk/cc/
Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

Director: Mgr Kieran Conry
Press Officers:
Tom Horwood, Carolyn Butler

If you wish to receive news releases by e-mail please let us have your address